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ABSTRACT

This report describes the Beginning Teacher Induction Program (BTIP) in 12 New Brunswick anglophone schools during 1996-1997. Data come from beginning teachers, mentors, principals and district coordinators who participated in the BTIP and completed a survey. Half of the mentors attended a mentor training workshop, an increase from the previous year, and they considered it valuable. Eleven districts held orientations for beginning teachers and mentors, which participants found useful. School level induction activities included regular informational contacts, discussions of strategies, resource sharing, and observations in other classrooms. Participation rates in local activities were higher than the previous year. Over half of the respondents noted a shortage of time to meet and accomplish planned activities. Different teaching assignments, grades, or subjects created problems for 22 percent of the participants. Several district coordinators and principals felt they should better inform school administrators about the BTIP and the needs of its participants. Most beginning teachers agreed that the BTIP had benefitted them as new teachers, and all participants agreed that the BTIP should continue. Results indicate significant improvement in the presentation and delivery of the BTIP at the provincial, district, and local level. Despite certain problems, the program is highly regarded for the support it provides to new teachers and for the opportunities for professional development of mentor teachers. (SM)

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ED 415 212

Report on the 1996-97 Beginning Teacher Induction Program in New Brunswick

by

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DEDICATION

This report is dedicated to the busy teachers, principals, and district coordinators who were willing to take time to complete the questionnaires which made this report possible.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this document is to report on the Beginning Teacher Induction Program (BTIP) in the anglophone schools of New Brunswick during the 1996-97 school year. The database consisted of replies from 76% of the beginning teachers (BT), 69% of the mentors, and 62% of the principals who took part in the survey. District 2, in the Moncton area, did not participate in the survey although they were part of the program. Altogether, about 125 new teachers were paired with mentor teachers in 78 schools. The previous year approximately 156 new teachers were identified, but not all were matched with mentors.

Provincial Mentor Training Workshop. Fifty-two per cent of the mentors attended the provincial Mentor Training Workshop held in Fredericton in September. This was an increase from the previous year when 25% attended. All of the mentors commented positively on the value of the two-day workshop for providing them with guidelines which clarified their roles as mentors. This workshop served as a practical and timely confidence builder.

District-sponsored Activities. The identification of BTIP district coordinators in all of the 12 anglophone school districts and their inclusion on the provincial Steering Committee may have accounted for a more comprehensive and consistent delivery of professional support activities at the district level than was the case previously. With one exception, all districts held orientation sessions for beginning teachers and mentors. The norm consisted of an initial orientation followed by a follow-up session in January, with ongoing support to obtain funds, manage budgets, and allocate resources. Although the approaches used by different districts varied, every participant rated district-sponsored activities as being helpful to their professional development. District coordinators played a critical role in organizing activities and providing support at this level.

Locally-planned Activities. The data collected from the beginning teachers provided a description of the kind and frequency of activities planned with mentors at the local school level. The norm consisted of regular, often daily, informal contacts at school, discussions of teaching strategies and procedures, resource sharing, and observations in other classrooms. Activities which involved fewer emotional risks, such as discussions, occurred more often than activities such as observing and conferencing. Participation rates in five out of seven lower-risk activities were significantly higher in 1997 than in 1996. In higher-risk activities, participation rates improved statistically in three out of five activities. The most dramatic increase occurred in the percentage of BT's who observed colleagues teach (77%). The activities which beginning teachers wished had happened more frequently included observing and being observed by their mentors, observing other colleagues teach, and receiving feedback about their teaching from their mentors. Both mentors and BT's rated school-based activities as being very useful to their professional development.

Conditions Causing Problems. Sixty per cent of respondents indicated that a shortage of time to meet and carry out the planned activities remained their biggest problem. This was consistent with previous results. Different teaching assignments, grades, or subjects created hurdles for 22 per cent; 15 per cent reported remote room locations posed problems. Although unclear BTIP

expectations continued to create difficulties for 19 per cent, this was a 9 per cent improvement from the previous year. It was also clear that the separation of funding responsibilities between the Department and the NBTA continued to cause confusion. Clusters of complaints indicated that certain districts need to place increased emphasis on increasing administrators' awareness of the needs of BTIP participants and on exploring local solutions to these problems.

Several district coordinators and several principals felt that steps should be taken to better inform school administrators about the BTI Program and the needs of its participants. They also recommended that ways by initiated to get administrators more directly involved.

Value of the BTIP. Ninety-six per cent of the beginning teachers agreed that the BTIP had been beneficial to them as new teachers. BT's, mentors, and principals were unanimous in recommending the continuation of this program. Many wrote comments which clearly articulated how the BTIP had helped them both professionally and emotionally.

Conclusions. Comparing the results of this survey to previous ones, it is evident that there have been significant improvements in the presentation and delivery of the BTIP at the provincial, district, and local school level. This is partly due to the designation and closer involvement of district personnel as coordinators. While program expectations and standards still appear to be applied inconsistently in a few districts, there is reason to expect continued improvement. Despite identifiable conditions which continue to cause difficulties for teachers, the BTIP is highly regarded for the support it provides to new teachers and for the opportunity it provides for professional development for the experienced teachers who act as mentors.

Recommendations

1. Continue the Beginning Teacher Induction Program as it is presently constituted. The principles are basically sound. Continue to evaluate and improve the communication of expectations and the delivery of training and support services.

2. Continue to offer the provincial Mentor Training Workshop for mentors and organizers as soon after school resumes as possible. The current time frame seems to work reasonably well for most people.

3. Request that the NBTA investigate ways to make their funds available at the same time as the Department.

4. Ask Dwain McLean, the NBTA representative on the Steering Committee, to provide clearer written guidelines, application forms, and whatever other information is necessary so district coordinators can help teams gain easier access to these funds. At the present time, there still appears to be considerable confusion among significant numbers about how to handle these procedures.

5. Ask Tom Hanley to arrange preparation of both promotional and practical BTIP information packets for circulation to:

a) the general teaching population, principals, and the general public. This material should describe the goals and organizational structure of the program and how people may get involved.

b) mentors and beginning teachers. This material should outline the kinds of information normally provided in provincial or district orientation workshops (i.e. goals, expectations, appropriate activities, access to and appropriate use of funds, and available resources).

6. Encourage coordinators to seek ways to inform all principals about the BTIP and to encourage them to get involved in ways which will have positive long-term benefits for their schools.

7. At the Steering Committee level, hold a discussion of the merits of consistent versus flexible application of funding guidelines from district to district.

8. Continue to solicit mentors from volunteer teachers (not principals) who have 5 or more years of teaching experience, show strong interpersonal skills, above average teaching skills, and have a genuine interest in the program.

9. Encourage coordinators to develop resource lists (pools) of trained mentors to whom they can turn when new teachers are hired late, or when a mentor becomes ill.

10. Make every effort to have every newly appointed mentor attend the provincial Mentor Training Workshop.

11. District coordinators should be expected to provide orientation sessions and at least one or more opportunities for group interaction and/or training for all BT's and mentors at the district level.

12. Coordinators should be asked to continue to coordinate an annual evaluation of the BTIP in their district, both for their own benefit and that of the Steering Committee.

13. Provide certificates for beginning teachers and place letters of commendation in the personal files of mentor teachers.

Report on the 1996-97 Beginning Teacher Induction Program in New Brunswick

The purpose of this document is to report on the Beginning Teachers Induction Program (BTIP) in the anglophone school districts of New Brunswick during the 1996-97 school year. Previous reports (Scott, Smith, & Grobe, 1995; Scott, 1996) provide details of the initial pilot projects from 1993-95 and the first year of full implementation in 1995-96. This report is based on data collected from both direct participants - mentors and beginning teachers, and from indirect participants - district coordinators and school principals.

Organization of the BTIP

Steering Committee

The executive body of the BTIP is a Steering Committee chaired by Tom Hanley, Assistant-director of the Professional Development and Innovations Branch in the Department of Education. In addition to one representative from the New Brunswick Teachers' Association (NBTA) and one from the University of New Brunswick, each of the 12 anglophone districts sends one representative, usually a district supervisor. The latter coordinates the program in his or her own district.

Funding

Funding is provided by both the Department of Education and the NBTA. The Department transfers to each district $500 for every pair of participants, based on full-time equivalent (FTE) beginning teachers. District Coordinators are responsible for allocating this money to the pairs of beginning teachers (BT) and mentors (M). In a memorandum to district coordinators, dated October 30, 1996, Mr. Hanley reminded coordinators of the intended uses for these funds:

- providing release time for new teachers and their mentors to visit each others' classrooms.
- providing release time for new teachers and their mentors to meet to discuss materials, to review videos, and to dialogue about teaching.
- purchasing materials that focus on the teaching process and support the professional growth of beginning teachers.

In addition, the NBTA makes $300 available to each pair of teachers (based on FTE beginning teachers), but they must apply directly to the NBTA professional development officer in order to receive it.

Training for Participants

The Provincial Steering Committee invited all experienced teachers who had agreed to act as mentors to a two-day Mentor Training Workshop held in Fredericton from September 20 to 21.

Approximately 80 mentors, district coordinators, and principals attended. Beginning teachers were not invited to this workshop. The purpose was to inform mentors about the expectations of the BTIP, to provide an opportunity to hear from successful BT-Mentor pairs from the previous year, and to learn skills which would facilitate their role as mentor.

It was expected that district coordinators would arrange for subsequent training sessions in each district and involve mentors, beginning teachers, and possibly principals.

Program Evaluation

In order to evaluate the extent to which program expectations were met, the Steering Committee asked me to organize a survey of all participants near the end of the school year. District Coordinators distributed and collected the questionnaires from beginning teachers, mentors, and principals and forwarded them to me for analysis.

The Database

Table 1, which follows, shows the number of participants and the number of questionnaires returned per district. In total, 125 new teachers were paired with mentors. Table 1 indicates that there were no returns from District 2 in Moncton. If the District 2 figures are removed, then the percent return is 76% for beginning teachers, 69% for mentors, and 62% for principals. Since surveys were never distributed in District 2, this figure accurately reflects the percentage of distributed questionnaires which were returned.

Although we use the term beginning teachers to refer to the teacher paired with an experienced mentor, it was evident, as in previous reports, that these people were not all beginning teachers in an absolute sense. Fifty-nine per cent reported that this was their first year of teaching. Most of the remainder had worked as long-term supply teachers; a few had taught outside the province. However, we can make the generalization that virtually all of the beginning teachers had year-long contracts, had relatively little teaching experience, and were considered new teachers in their schools and districts. Only in School District 12 (Woodstock) did some second-year teachers participate in the BTIP since they had joined the 1995-96 program after Christmas, the district was willing to finance their participation independent of the provincial grants.

Table 1

The numbers of beginning teachers, mentors, and principals who participated in the BTIP and who returned survey forms.

Districts	BT		Mentor		Principal	
Participants/Returns	P	R	P	R	P	R
2	36	0	36	0	9	0
4	5	4	5	2	3	3
6	4	4	4	4	3	2
8	18	10	18	7	15	8
10	5	5	5	2	3	0
12	5	4	5	5	5	5
13	9	9	9	9	7	5
14	10	10*	10	6	4	0
15	2	1	2	2	2	2
16	5	5	5	5	5	4
17	12	8	12	8	9	6
18	14	11	14	11	13	8
Totals	**125**	**71**	**125**	**61**	**78**	**43**

*used 2 kinds of survey forms

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The Findings

Reaction to the Provincial Mentor Training Workshop

> *I found it to be extremely important in order to understand what was expected of me. It was great to get practical ideas and direction from those who had previously gone through it.*
>
> *- District 18 mentor*

Thirty of the fifty-eight mentors (52%) who completed questionnaires attended the provincial Mentor Training Workshop in September. This represents an increase from 25% in 1996. Some districts were well represented; others were not. All of the participants commented positively on the value of the workshop for providing them with guidelines for their role as mentors. They appreciated hearing first-hand from previous participants what activities to plan for, how to access funds, how funds could be spent, and what resources proved useful. Several mentors commented that they came away from the workshop with a positive feeling that they were on the right track. Others said that the workshop was a helpful introduction to the program.

The workshop was held approximately one month after the opening of school. Many of the mentors who did not attend, indicated that either they were not informed about it or that they joined the program later in the fall. Only one of the attending mentors called for an earlier date for the workshop. The value of this workshop for new mentors is very evident from the comments. Ideally, every new mentor should attend. The importance of holding it relatively early in the year is also evident. The late September timing seems to be a compromise. Hopefully, as the program becomes better known and district coordinators become familiar with the time frame, a higher percentage of mentors will be able to attend the provincial workshop.

District-sponsored Activities

> *A more formal introduction to the program might prepare both mentor and mentee for a more successful outcome.*
>
> *- District 8 beginning teacher*

The data from the beginning teachers and mentors indicated that all but one of the district coordinators provided BTIP orientation workshops for both BT's and mentors after the provincial Mentor Training Workshop. This reflects a dramatic improvement from the previous year when only six of twelve districts provided orientation sessions. The district norm seems to have included an initial orientation session soon after the provincial workshop and a follow-up district workshop or get-together at a later date. Some districts, however, held only one district-wide session; others held a third one near the end of the school year, in order to evaluate the district program. District coordinators showed considerable flexibility and ingenuity in the formats used for the district meetings. Some used funds to meet during school time; others chose to meet over supper. A few coordinators arranged relatively frequent but informal group meetings in which BT's and mentors shared ideas and experiences. These proved to be quite popular. Many

BT's in districts which did not hold them, requested opportunities for such collaboration. Regardless of the format, every respondent rated the district-sponsored activities as positive experiences. In fact, nearly all rated their district-wide meetings/workshops as "very useful". In addition, district coordinators served as resources and facilitators to any participants and principals who required help. Their direct involvement was critical to success at the district level.

Locally-planned Activities

> *I would suggest it was a disadvantage in not being able to observe my mentor teach. This was due to the fact we were on the same team and teach at the same time periods.*
> *- District 18 beginning teacher*

Both the provincial and district workshops are intended to provide ideas and guidelines for appropriate professional activities for mentors and beginning teachers in their individual schools. Much of the data collected from these participants revealed the frequency and kinds of activities mutually pursued by the beginning teacher and his or her mentor. Table 2, which follows, compares the relative frequency of locally-initiated activities reported in 1997 to those in 1996. The number of BT's responding to this part of the questionnaire in 1997 ranged from 62 - 64 and in 1996 from 62 - 65. However, the percentage return was much higher (76%) in 1997 than in 1996 (49%).

The norm for local activities consisted of regular (often daily) informal contacts at school, discussions of topics which teachers consider critical, observations in other classrooms, and sharing of resources. Although classroom observations occurred less frequently, nearly every mentor and beginning teacher reported participating in the activities mentioned above. Most pairs chose to schedule regular formal meetings in addition to their briefer, daily contacts. Partners' discussions tended to focus on these topics; teaching ideas or strategies, curriculum or lesson planning, classroom management techniques, student assessment and reporting, and administrative policies and procedures.

The first seven rows on Table 2 represent what I would term lower-risk activities, both from an emotional and professional perspective. A glance down the last column which reports the percentage of beginning teachers who participated in activities more than ten times, reveals high rates of participation. A comparison of the 1996 figures to 1997 indicates that in every case participation rates improved, significantly for five of the seven activities. An examination of the first frequency column also attests to the fact that there were significantly fewer cases of non-participation this year than last. In other words, beginning teachers and mentors were doing what was expected of them more often.

Rows nine through thirteen comprise what I would term higher-risk activities -- ones which place higher emotional and professional demands on participants. Some training in the skills of classroom observation and conferencing is recommended for these activities. If one looks at the last frequency column, it becomes obvious that the high participation rates of the first seven rows have been replaced by much lower rates. This is to be expected. Despite the lower participation rates in this section, a statistical analysis indicated that there have been significant gains in three of the five activities.

Table 2

Table comparing the relative frequency in percentages with which beginning teachers participated in specific professional activities during the 1997 BTIP compared to 1996.

		Frequency				
Professional Activities		**0**	**1-5**	**6-10**	**>10**	***p < 0.05 **p < 0.01**
1. Make informal contacts with mentor at school	**1997**	1.6	3.2	4.8	90.6	*
	1996	4.6	12.3	12.3	70.4	
2. Discuss teaching ideas or strategies	**1997**	0	11.7	20	68.3	*
	1996	3.1	27.5	23	45.9	
3. Share or research teaching materials, books, etc	**1997**	1.6	20.6	33.3	44.4	*
	1996	10.7	33.7	16.8	38.2	
4. Discuss curriculum or lesson planning	**1997**	3.2	19.4	22.6	54.8	
	1996	10.7	33.7	19.9	35.2	
5. Discuss student assessment or reporting	**1997**	1.6	27.4	25.8	45.2	
	1996	12.7	30.2	23.8	33.3	
6. Discuss classroom management techniques	**1997**	0	20.6	27	52.4	*
	1996	6.3	36.5	27	30.2	
7. Discuss administrative policies or procedures	**1997**	1.6	30.6	22.6	45.2	**
	1996	6.2	40.6	21.9	23.4	
8. Meet mentor socially out of school	**1997**	19.4	58.1	11.3	11.3	
	1996	32.8	48.4	9.4	10.9	
9. Meet mentor in scheduled (formal) setting	**1997**	14.5	51.6	12.9	21	*
	1996	15.3	71.9	4.6	7.6	
10. Receive feedback about my teaching from mentor	**1997**	27.4	38.7	16.1	17.7	
	1996	27	50.8	15.9	6.3	
11. Mentor observes me teach	**1997**	46.8	35.5	8.1	9.7	
	1996	46	46	7.9	3.2	
12. Observe other colleagues teaching (not mentor)	**1997**	22.6	62.9	8.1	6.4	**
	1996	50	39.1	0	10.9	
13. Observe my mentor teaching in his/her own class	**1997**	41.9	35.5	12.9	9.7	*
	1996	51.6	40.3	0	8.1	

One notable example can be seen in the non-participation column of row 12. This reflects a dramatic rise (77% compared to 51%) in the number of beginning teachers who were able to observe their colleagues teach during 1997. Similarly, significantly higher numbers (58% compared to 48%) of BT's observed their mentors teaching. However, the percentage of mentors who observed their beginning teachers (53%) and provided feedback (73%) remained virtually unchanged. While this confirms that many mentors still feel uncomfortable about observing and being observed by beginning teachers, the earlier figures may imply teachers generally are becoming less defensive about being observed.

Table 2 raises some interesting questions. For example, why are mentors more reluctant to allow observation of their teaching than colleagues who are not in the program? Why are nearly half of the mentors not observing their partners? How can they provide feedback about the teaching of their partner (73%) when they have not seen him or her actually teach (47%)?

It is noteworthy that the activities which BT's wished had happened more frequently were observing and being observed by their mentors (20%), observing other colleagues teach (18%), and receiving feedback about their teaching from mentors (16%). Participants in the 1996 survey reported similar feelings.

While this collage of professional activities involving mentors and their protegees can safely be said to be centered within the local school, this picture is not complete, especially in some districts. It was evident that the guidelines for the use of BTIP funds received more flexible interpretations in some districts than others. At one extreme was a district in which the profile for every BT was different; at the other was a district in which everyone reported the same activities. While a few districts spent a significant proportion of their funds for supply teachers so beginning teachers and mentors could attend workshops or conferences, most used it to buy time so mentors and their partners could observe and conference one another, discuss teaching issues, and visit other classrooms. Frequently this common core of activities was individualized to meet a particular professional need (e.g. attend a computer or French second language workshop).

Many pairs used some of their funds for supply teachers so they could have blocks of uninterrupted time for discussions or curriculum planning. A few chose to meet away from the school building. One District 13 mentor referred to this as "pressureless time" away from the distractions of the school. Others used spare periods, lunch periods, and after-school time. Most opted to use a combination of supply-teacher time and personal time.

While nearly every district diverted some of its BTIP funds for district meetings, beginning teachers and mentors regularly used these funds for visits to other classrooms, either in one's own school or elsewhere. These visits were normally arranged by the mentor or the beginning teacher. Participants consistently rated observations of mentor and colleagues as very useful. A principal in District 4 suggested that encouraging teachers to visit other classrooms was one way of improving the program. While he was not against out-of-school visitations, he felt that "more opportunity to visit from within would be more beneficial".

Both mentors and beginning teachers gave consistently high ratings to their professional activities. Several requested more flexibility in how the money could be spent. Sometimes this amounted to a request to spend funds to purchase equipment, software, or classroom materials. Clearly these requests are beyond the present guidelines of the BTIP as outlined in Mr. Hanley's memo. Other respondents said they appreciated the flexibility shown in the use of BTIP funds.

Conditions Which Caused Problems

> *Time is the biggest enemy of any program, but this program does allow time and I think it works well for anyone involved in it.*
>
> *- District 17 mentor*

Lack of time remains the biggest obstacle for both mentors and their mentees. Sixty percent of the BT's indicated this was a problem and 13% called it a significant problem. Other conditions such as the location of the mentor's room relative to the BT's (15%) and different teaching assignments from the mentor (22%) placed further limitations on the time available. These results remain quite consistent with the 1996 Report.

Although 19% of beginning teachers still complained that BTIP expectations were unclear, this is an improvement from 28% the previous year. The data indicated that most of the complaints came from two districts, thus indicating a need to provide clearer guidelines in those districts. A similar pattern existed with regard to accessing BTIP funds. This was reported as causing difficulties in 6 districts, but nearly half of the complaints came from one district. Sufficient numbers of teachers, principals, and coordinators also asked for specific guidelines for the expenditure of funds to indicate that this issue is continuing to create anxiety among participants and organizers alike.

The surveys completed by the district coordinators clearly indicated that they are aware of the problems identified by the M-BT pairs and could add a few of their own. Because of the nature of their roles, coordinators must act as local experts for the participating teachers. The Coordinators are very anxious to obtain clear guidelines concerning a) appropriate BTIP activities b) acceptable uses for BTIP funds, and c) how to apply for NBTA funds.

The fact that part of the BTIP funding comes from the Department of Education and part from the NBTA is confusing to teachers and to some coordinators. Furthermore, the delay of NBTA funds pending approval by the Association adds to the difficulties. Ideally, coordinators would like to have access to these funds at the same time as the Department funds. If these suggestions prove impractical, perhaps the best solution is to request that NBTA representative, Dwain McLean, provide clear guidelines, practical application forms, and a written explanation of the process which will be readily available to coordinators for distribution to participants.

District coordinators were very conscious of the need to improve communication of the BTIP goals and operational procedures. Many requested what they termed an "information package"

which would be useful to their various clients - new teachers, mentors, principals, and interested faculty. They wanted better dissemination of information to the teaching profession in general, and they also wanted to be able to provide BTIP guidelines to potential mentors well in advance of their commitment, so they had time to consider whether or not to participate. Coordinators see themselves as the natural communication conduit from the Steering Committee to the teachers and principals, and they look to the Department and the NBTA for help and leadership in providing the information in forms they can conveniently use. One mentor-BT team in District 6 spent considerable time preparing a handbook of guidelines for use by future participants. Besides indicating the value participants place on this kind of resource, it might prove useful as a model for provincial use.

Several district coordinators, beginning teachers, and one principal called for more careful selection of mentors. Although beginning teachers in this survey did not report any incompatibility problems, it was evident that some matches were far from ideal. A principal reported that the BT in his school had trouble communicating with the mentor because the latter taught in three schools. A mentor who was asked to join the program after the provincial mentor training, admitted to feeling uncomfortable about visiting other classrooms. One BT urged organizers to "choose mentors who are **really** interested in the program. Don't just stick anyone there because nothing will be accomplished". A principal who had agreed to act as mentor said he felt guilty because administrative duties had interfered with his role, as mentor. Having experienced the dual role, he now agreed with the 1996 recommendation that administrators should not be asked to act as mentors.

Reflecting on these examples leads me to the conclusion that likely these individuals agreed to be mentors because there was a desperate need and no one else volunteered. If so, it reinforces the suggestion of a district coordinator that district mentor pools be established to avoid late recruitment of untrained mentors or to provide experienced replacements for mentors who suffer long-term illness.

Four district coordinators identified a need to get principals more involved in the induction program and to make them more aware of its goals and expectations. Clearly, these coordinators wanted principals to accept more responsibility for the success of the program in their schools. Ironically, this plea was echoed by several principals who said that they wanted to be included in the initial orientation and wanted more information about the BTIP. The merits of separate inservice for principals versus inclusion in BT-M workshops could be debated at some length. Perhaps the point to emphasize is that principals need to be well informed of the program and district coordinators would be well advised to negotiate with their principals the kind of involvement best suited to their school and district.

Value of the Program

> *In time of cutbacks and re-organization, I feel it needs to be said, this program is a definite success and extremely valuable.*
>
> *- District 6 beginning teacher*

Despite the continuing problems outlined above, 96% of the new teachers either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: "I feel that overall the BTIP has been beneficial to me as a beginning teacher". One BT disagreed and one was unsure. The profile of the former indicated limited mentor contact, no observation of mentor or colleague's teaching, and no mentor observation or feedback on teaching. Although they met informally, discussed teaching ideas, and shared resources, there was no indication that they participated in any district orientation or other planned professional activities. The "unsure" individual wrote that because of a 7/8 schedule and coaching commitments, he had been unable to take advantage of the program, but he felt the program itself was valuable.

Beginning teachers, mentors, and principals were unanimous in calling for the continuation of the program. Ninety-three percent of the mentors indicated they would be willing to do it again. A great many of them spoke highly of the professional quality of their protegées and of the mutual benefits of this partnership. These quotations were representative:

> *The beginning teacher I worked with was very pleasant, cooperative, and enthusiastic. As a mentor I had to stop and evaluate my own teaching and evaluation practices. It's very good to sit and reflect on your teaching no matter how many years you have taught. The whole experience was positive for me.*
>
> *- District 16 mentor*

> *Becoming infected with some of the enthusiasm of a new teacher full of bright ideas has helped me to re-focus and work harder in my own teaching.*
>
> *- District 13 mentor*

> *It has given me new ideas and energy because of the sharing which occurs in both directions - from me to my partner and my partner to me.*
>
> *- District 12 mentor*

Principals, too, had high praise for the value of the BTIP, not only for teachers, but also for themselves as administrators:

> *This is the second year this school has been involved in the program and both years were very successful and worthwhile. It certainly lifted a burden from my shoulders in not having to closely monitor the new teacher in his understanding of curriculum and school routines.*
>
> *- District 16 principal*

The BTIP coordinator in the same district said she felt it was one of the most productive programs she has seen. Clearly, the participants and organizers believe that the BTIP is a very valuable program for a variety of reasons.

Conclusions

The BTIP program has helped to make my first year teaching a positive and rewarding experience. I highly recommend its continuation.

- District 14 beginning teacher

Having evaluated the BTIP from its beginnings as a pilot project through its second year of full implementation, I see steady progress in improving its various components. One of the most encouraging parts of the data has been the increase in participation rates for the activities listed in Table 2. Responses from both direct and indirect participants indicate that the basic concept of pairing new and experienced teachers is not only sound, but mutually beneficial. The mentor selection process requires continuing attention by administrators and district coordinators but it should improve as the criteria for successful matches become more widely disseminated and a pool of trained mentors develops in schools.

The provincial Mentor Training Workshop seems to be well designed and has proven its worth to those who attend. Organizers need to seek ways to increase the participation rate, until it rarely occurs that an untrained mentor is asked to assume mentoring responsibilities. Recent widespread staff reorganizations across the province may have caused unusual delays in teacher transfers and hiring. Hopefully this situation will improve, making it easier for districts to hire new teachers earlier in the year.

It is very clear that district coordinators play a key role in facilitating the BTIP at the district and school level. Since they were added to the Steering Committee, significant improvements have occurred in providing orientation and follow-up workshops for BT's and mentors. Retirements, transfers, and changes in personnel have meant that some coordinators assumed their BTIP responsibilities after the 1996-97 program had begun, and consequently some beginning teachers failed to receive the service they deserved. As the program becomes better known and as coordinators gain experience, there should be more consistent delivery of service across the province.

Communication of BTIP expectations and guidelines has improved, but it needs to get better. It is essential for the Department and the NBTA to provide professionally prepared pamphlets, brochures, and practical guidelines covering such topics as goals, mentor selection criteria, appropriate professional activities, approved uses of funds, recommended resources, and forms to expedite the requisition and accounting of NBTA funds. These need to be readily available at the district level for participants and interested teachers.

While great progress has been made in involving the district coordinators in the BTIP, principals have been less directly involved. It is very important to the continuing and future success of the program that they become well informed about the program and that they have opportunities to participate in the program (except as mentors) in their roles as administrators and instructional leaders. Coordinators must guard against the temptation to circumvent principals even though it will require a greater time commitment in the short-term.

We have learned a lot of valuable lessons about successful teacher induction over the past 4 years. We need to share that knowledge and experience with our own teachers and continue to fine tune the organization and implementation process. For example, we know that mentors and beginning teachers who teach part-time, teach in more than one school, teach different grades or subjects, or are not located in close proximity in their building are less likely to make successful partners. Some defy the odds, but by making careful matches, organizers can improve the quality even of successful partnerships.

Recommendations

1. Continue the Beginning Teacher Induction Program as it is presently constituted. The principles are basically sound. Continue to evaluate and to improve the communication of expectations and the delivery of training and support services.

2. Continue to offer the provincial Mentor Training Workshop for mentors and organizers as soon after school resumes as possible. The current time frame seems to work reasonably well for most people.

2. Request that the NBTA investigate ways to make their funds available at the same time as the Department.

4. Ask Dwain McLean, the NBTA representative on the Steering Committee, to provide clearer written guidelines, application forms, and whatever other information is necessary so district coordinators can help teams gain easier access to these funds. At the present time, there still appears to be considerable confusion among significant numbers about how to handle these procedures.

5. Ask Tom Hanley to arrange preparation of both promotional and practical BTIP information packets for circulation to:

    a) the general teaching population, principals, and the general public. These materials should describe the goals and organizational structure of the program and how people may get involved.
    b) mentors and beginning teachers. These materials should outline the kinds of information normally provided in provincial or district orientation workshops (i.e. goals, expectations, appropriate activities, access to and appropriate use of funds, and available resources).

6. Encourage coordinators to seek ways to inform all principals about the BTIP and to encourage them to get involved in ways which will have positive long-term benefits for their schools.

7. At the Steering Committee level, hold a discussion of the merits of consistent versus flexible application of funding guidelines from district to district.

8. Continue to solicit mentors from volunteer teachers (not principals) who have 5 or more years of teaching experience, show strong interpersonal skills, above average teaching skills, and have a genuine interest in the program.

9. Encourage coordinators to develop resource lists (pools) of trained mentors to whom they can turn when new teachers are hired late, or when a mentor becomes ill.

10. Make every effort to have every newly appointed mentor attend the provincial Mentor Training Workshop.

11. District coordinators should be expected to provide orientation sessions and at least one or more opportunities for group interaction and/or training for all BT's and mentors at the district level.

12. Coordinators should be asked to continue to coordinate an annual evaluation of the BTIP in their district, both for their own benefit and that of the Steering Committee.

13. Provide certificates for beginning teachers and place letters of commendation in the personal files of mentor teachers.